IN THE CLAIMS

Please replace the present listing of claims with the following listing of amended claims.

1-102. (canceled).

103. (Original) A communication system for balancing traffic on a plurality of return channels, comprising:

a control station to transmit a broadcast signal to a remote user,

said broadcast signal including a non-real time frame marker, a timing message, and a return channel control message;

a receiver at the remote user to receive the broadcast signal and determine a return channel frame start time using the non-real time frame marker and the timing message; and

a transmitter at the remote user to uplink a user message on one return channel of the plurality of return channels during a predetermined period after the return channel frame start time, wherein an uplink frequency of said one return channel is determined by the return channel control message.

104. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, wherein a bandwidth of said one return channel is determined by the return channel control message.

105. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, further comprising a return channel controller in the control station, said return channel controller providing the return channel control message.

106. (Original) The communication system of claim 105, wherein the return channel controller further provides a bandwidth allocation message in the broadcast signal which sets a bandwidth of said one return channel.

107. (Original) The communication system of claim 106, wherein the bandwidth of said one return channel is set based on a predicted load factor.

108. (Original) The communication system of claim 105, wherein the bandwidth of said one return channel is set by evaluating a user backlog indicator transmitted by the remote user to the control station.

109. (Original) The communication system of claim 108, wherein the bandwidth of said one return channel is set to a stream bandwidth.

110. (Original) The communication system of claim 108, wherein the uplink frequency of said one return channel is set to a dedicated frequency based on an evaluation of the user backlog indicator.

111. (Original) The communication system of claim 105, wherein the return channel controller changes the uplink frequency to a different frequency within a first return channel group.

112. (Original) The communication system of claim 105, wherein the return channel controller changes the uplink frequency to a different frequency within a second return channel group.

113. (Original) The communication system of claim 112, wherein the return channel controller changes the uplink frequency to a different frequency based on a system load factor.

114. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, wherein a bandwidth of said one return channel is determined by a bandwidth allocation request included in the user message uplinked by the remote user.

115. (Original) The communication system of claim 114, wherein the user message is an ALOHA-type burst transmission.

116. (Original) The communication system of claim 115, wherein the user message includes the bandwidth allocation request and an additional user message, said additional user message having a size less than a predetermined threshold size.

117. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, wherein said broadcast signal is an asynchronous DVB transport stream.

118. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, further comprising a plurality of remote users sharing the plurality of return channels and a return channel controller, wherein the return channel controller controls the uplink frequency of each of the plurality of return channels through the return channel control message.

119. (Original) The communication system of claim 118, wherein said return channel controller controls a bandwidth allocation for each of the plurality of return channels.

120. (Original) The communication system of claim 118, wherein a subset of the plurality of return channels are ALOHA burst channels, and wherein said return channel controller shifts a remote user uplink from an ALOHA burst channel to a non-ALOHA burst channel in accordance with the return channel control message.

121. (Original) The communication system of claim 120, wherein the ALOHA burst channel is selected from the subset of the plurality of return channels by the remote user using a random weighted frequency selection criteria.

122. (Original) The communication system of claim 120, wherein said non ALOHA burst channel is selected by the control station using a group load factor.

123. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, wherein said broadcast signal is encapsulated in an IP/DVB protocol layer.

124. (Original) The communication system of claim 103, further comprising a communication satellite to relay the transmitted broadcast signal to the receiver.

125-141. (Canceled).